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Major News Releases and Speeches

Nov. 13-Nov 20, 1981

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News Releases

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USDA AGENCY SAVES \$21.7 MILLION IN FY 1981

WASHINGTON, Nov. 13—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block today presented President Reagan with a symbolic check for \$21,717,000 representing fiscal 1981 savings in salaries and expenses by one USDA agency.

The check was presented to Block Thursday by Everett Rank, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. The money will be returned to the U.S. Treasury.

"We should not overlook the potential for savings that come from efficient management of our day-to-day operations," Block said. "This is a tremendous savings for just one agency. It proves that if we put our minds to it, we can accomplish the President's goal of producing savings in government without reducing the quality of services we provide to the public."

Block said the savings resulted from improved personnel staffing and management practices, reduced employee travel and more efficient procedures for purchasing office equipment and supplies.

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MILK SUPPORT PRICES REMAIN UNCHANGED UNTIL END OF THE YEAR

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17—The federal milk support price will remain at \$13.10 per hundred pounds for milk with a milkfat content of 3.67 percent—the national average—until the end of the year, as a result of legislation signed by President Reagan.

The same legislation also continues the support price of \$12.80 per hundred pounds for milk with a milkfat content of 3.5 percent.

This legislative action (Public Law 97-77) continues in force a similar law, signed Oct. 20, that rolled back the milk support price from

\$13.49 to \$13.10. The \$13.49 figure was required under permanent legislation.

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McMILLAN WELCOMES SWINE INDUSTRY INPUT ON PSEUDORABIES

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17—Assistant Secretary of Agriculture C.W. McMillan said today U.S. Department of Agriculture officials will work with the swine industry to devise plans to combat and eventually eradicate pseudorabies, including development of pilot eradication programs.

A recent USDA cost-benefit study showed the disease is now costing the U.S. swine industry about \$34 million per year. Pseudorabies—also called Aujeszky's disease, mad itch in cattle and infectious bulbar paralysis—was reported in swine in 24 states in 1980.

It is a virus disease of swine and other animals. Young pigs affected with the disease usually die, while mature hogs may show little or no signs of the disease. Pseudorabies is usually fatal when it spreads to cattle, sheep, dogs, cats and wildlife. It does not affect humans.

"USDA will work with the swine industry to develop pilot eradication programs in areas of several states to assess different methods of cleaning up infected herds and areas," McMillan said.

A group of authorities on this subject met Nov. 5 and 6 at the headquarters of the National Pork Producers Council, in Des Moines, Iowa, McMillan said. The authorities included representatives of the swine industry and farm organizations, as well as university and government scientists and veterinarians.

The group said eradication of pseudorabies should be national public policy.

The group also asked for additional research to improve and standardize diagnostic testing; develop better vaccines; and gain a better understanding of the epidemiology and latent form of the disease. It

also called for industry consultation with USDA to make current interstate shipping regulations more equitable for all swine producers.

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SMALL FARMS MAKE COMEBACK; BIG INCREASE PREDICTED IN DECADE AHEAD

BELTSVILLE, Md., Nov. 18—Small farms, which fell in numbers year after year during the 1950's and 1960's, are bouncing back and will increase 18 to 20 percent by the end of the 1980's.

Howard W. Kerr, coordinator for small farms research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service in the northeastern United States, made the comment and prediction here today at the wrap-up session of a 2 1/2-day symposium on small-scale farming.

This appraisal is based on small farming surveys he conducted in the Northeast in 1979 and again in 1981.

"There is a growing realization that small farms are not a declining backwater of American agriculture," Kerr said. "In fact, small farms in the Northeast are gaining an increasingly important role in the region's agriculture."

Asked exactly what is a "small" farm, Kerr said, "There's much confusion in people's minds about the answer to that question. The problem is that a farm considered 'small' under given circumstances is perceived as 'large' in another. A 'large' farm in the eastern United States, for example, might be 'small' in the western part of the country."

Kerr defines a small farm as self-sufficient in labor and management, with income below the non-metropolitan average for its state. Often, he said, the small farm is family-operated and at least one member of the family has a job off the farm.

People who commute to their jobs in cities have much in common with small-scale farmers, some of whom may abandon farming because of the increasing costs of commuting considerable distances to their off-farm jobs, said Kerr.

Forty-two percent of the farms in the 12-state area from West Virginia to Maine were classified as small farms. Sixty percent of the farms in New Hampshire, Rhode Island and West Virginia were considered small.

Kerr was asked which problems pose the biggest challenges to small-scale farmers in the 10 years ahead.

He said the most critical issues are land prices, interest rates and fuel costs, followed by employment opportunities.

"Fuel costs and employment opportunities are projected to worsen during the balance of the Eighties. Urbanization is expected to drive up land prices near the population centers in the Northeast."

Kerr said the survey findings on land prices and other issues in the Northeast could have implications for the outlook for small farms in other sections of the country as well.

Some crops have better potential than others for small farmers, Kerr said.

"Northeast small-scale farmers grow vegetables, sweet corn, tomatoes, berries, apples, strawberries, beef cattle, sheep, goats, hay forage crops and others. Strawberry production is especially prevalent and will continue to gain importance."

Ironically, the survey suggests, the same factors—energy shortages and travel cost—may help the small-scale farmer by turning consumers to local sources for their vegetables, berries and other foods. He said research is needed to find new ways of direct marketing crops, tailoring products to specific market and increasing production on limited acres

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ALSPACH NAMED ACTING FNS ADMINISTRATOR

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—David B. Alspach today was named acting administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service by Mary Jarratt, assistant secretary for food and consumer services.

Alspach most recently served as regional administrator for the Southeast Region of the Food and Nutrition Service. He has had broad experience in domestic feeding programs.

He replaces G. William Hoagland who has been named special assistant for food and nutrition in the office of the secretary.

Prior to coming to USDA, Hoagland served as the chief policy analyst for human resources for the Congressional Budget Office. In his new position, he will be responsible for food and nutritional policy analysis in the office of the secretary.

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1982-83 BRAZIL COFFEE OUTPUT ESTIMATED AT 16 MILLION BAGS

WASHINGTON, Nov. 18—Brazil's 1982-83 coffee crop is forecast at 16 million bags by the U.S. Department of Agriculture attache in Rio de Janeiro.

A preliminary USDA assessment following the July frost had placed production potential at between 15 and 18 million bags.

The 1981-82 crop is estimated at 32.5 million bags.

Brazil's 1982-83 July to June exports are forecast at 16.0 million bags, compared with an estimated 17.5 million bags in 1981-82. Carry-in stocks for the 1982-83 marketing year are forecast at 13.2 million bags, 7.0 million bags above the 1981-82 level.

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USDA PROPOSES NEW GRADE STANDARDS FOR KIWIFRUIT

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to establish voluntary grade standards for kiwifruit to promote orderly and efficient marketing in the rapidly expanding U.S. kiwifruit industry.

Kiwifruit production is increasing in the United States, particularly in California, where about 600 acres are now in commercial production, said Mildred Thymian, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. Shipping volume increased from 15,000 containers in 1978 to about 800,000 in 1980.

"There is a definite industry need for U.S. grade standards which would provide a uniform basis for trading kiwifruit that are imported, exported or marketed domestically," Thymian said.

The standards were requested by the Kiwifruit Growers of California and the California Kiwifruit Commission.

Under the proposal, grade names of kiwifruit would be U.S. Fancy, U.S. No. 1 and U.S. No. 2.

"These grade standards would provide the kiwifruit industry with U.S. standards similar to those used extensively by the fresh produce industry to assist in the orderly marketing of other commodities," said Thymian.

Comments on the proposal must be sent in duplicate by Feb. 25 to the hearing clerk, U.S. Department of Agriculture, rm. 1077-S, Washington, D.C., 20250. The proposal will be published in the Nov. 20 Federal Register, available in most public libraries.

The Agricultural Marketing Service develops grade standards and provides grading services to the agricultural industry. Use of the standards and services is voluntary and is paid for by the users.

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BLOCK ANNOUNCES NEW POLICY ON NAVEL ORANGE MARKETING ORDER FOR CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19—Secretary of Agriculture John R. Block has announced closer U.S. Department of Agriculture oversight over the prorate provisions of the navel orange marketing order, which regulates handlers in California and Arizona.

These provisions regulate quantities of fresh market oranges that handlers may ship each week. The prorate system allows for navel orange producers to spread the marketing of their crop over the entire season, usually about six months.

Block said he sent a letter to Glenn E. Carman, chairman of the Navel Orange Administrative Committee in Riverside, Calif., which said, ". . .it is my intention for the Secretary's office to analyze each weekly recommendation for the total quantity (prorate) of navel oranges which may be handled during the next succeeding week. If

such recommendations are justified, an appropriate regulation will be issued."

Block also said he asked the committee to "explore changes to the present prorate marketing strategy with the goal of making alternative recommendations to the use of prorate for the 1982-83 navel orange marketing season."

The Navel Orange Administrative Committee is composed of navel orange growers and handlers. It administers the federal marketing order that regulates the handling of California-Arizona navel oranges. Under the order, USDA can establish regulations to govern the quantity of navel oranges handlers can ship in fresh form to U.S. and Canadian markets each week during the season.

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